

The Builder.

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UCH of our readers as are inclined for a ramble, and disposed to forget for awhile the Building in Hyde Park, the question of Copyism, the lethargy and close-door doings of the sewers' people, and other amusing and light topics of the day, will probably not object to make with us a short excursion from Oxford, the city of colleges and halls.

Instead of going to Silchester, to see its walls and earth-works, with the main body of the Architectural Institute, the other day,* we had a delicious float on the silver Isis (that is, the Thames, before it is spoilt), with a dozen merry knowledgeable men, not afraid of enjoying themselves. Several of them were architects, one was the vice-principal of a college, two or three were *littérateurs*, and all were staunch lovers of "the ways of hoar antiquity," especially of those which are "strewn with flowers," and entered fully into what they were about. They thought with Dr. Combe, who says, in one of his letters recently published,—"If we listen, let us listen with our whole powers; if we play, let us play with conscientiousness of action among the faculties; if we read, let us do it in the same way; if we hear of something affecting other people, let us try to enter into it as if it were our own. A vigorous and most useful command of mental power will thus be attained which is infinitely more valuable than any amount of mere knowledge."

A horse-boat from the Folly-bridge received the party, and though they left the bridge behind them they would not give up him of the cap and bells, after whom it is named, maintaining that those who would always seem wise are very foolish. It was one of those days when, as many writers have said and every body has felt, it is happiness enough merely to live. The sun positively flooded every thing with light, and Zephyr, to be mythological, was kind enough to come out at the same time, and prevent him from being disagreeable. The birds gladdened the ears, the trees refreshed the sight, and the newly-made

hay on every side (so much of it that the oldest man of the party thought himself literally in the *hay-day* of life), pleased the sense of smelling, and freshened enjoyment: They all forgot the struggles of the dusty town and "babbled of green fields."

Ifsey Church, one of the most interesting remnants of the Norman period that we have, and known probably to the majority of our readers, was the first stopping-place. Its richly ornamented doorways will be remembered from Britton's "5th volume," even by those who have not seen the building, as well as the general arrangement of the church and its appearance. It is a long, narrow parallelogram, 103 feet by scarcely 20 feet, including an Early English addition to the chancel; and the Norman tower, low and massive, rises at the junction of the nave and the chancel.

The church was repaired and partly restored a few years ago, when the appearance of the east end, externally, was unnecessarily spoiled by two enormous buttresses. Little is known of the early history of Ifsey Church. It was built previous to 1189, the year in which Henry the Second died; because, in a charter granted to the priory of Austin Canons. In Kenilworth, in the latter part of that king's reign, it is stated that the church (called therein of *Yfete*) was given to that priory by Juliana de Sancto Remigio. The "Sagittarius," or mounted archer, appears in the capitals of the columns at the south door and elsewhere, and, as this is the heraldic badge of King Stephen, it is not unlikely that the church was built in his reign, that is, between the years 1135 and 1154.

The boat was again put in requisition, and ultimately deposited its freight at Nuneham Park, where now stands the curious conduit, built, 1610, by Otho Nicholson, Master of Arts, of Christ Church, at the junction of the four ways, in Oxford, called *Carfax*. The historian of Oxford, Anthony Wood, states "that Quatrevois, or Carfax, was accounted the Meditullium of the city, the heart of the market, and the chiefest place where most sorts of merchandise were exposed for sale. In the middle of this Quadrivium, or four ways, a very fair and beautiful conduit presents itself to us, such for its images of ancient Kings about it, gilding, and exquisite carving, the like is hardly to be found in England."

Nicholson brought the water from the hill above North Hinksey to the several colleges: the cost of the conduit, which, from its site, is still called the "Carfax Conduit," including laying the pipes, was 2,500*l.* As early as 1635 it appears to have been considered a nuisance, but it remained till 1786, when the commissioners for paving determined it should be taken down. A paper in a collection of documents relating to Oxford, exhibited by Mr. Dunkin, in the temporary museum, says:—

"The conduit was presented by Otho Nicholson to the University and City, who, under the authority of the Paving Act, passed in 1771, caused it to be removed in 1787, and presented it to the Earl of Harcourt, in whose park it still stands. Its more appropriate situation would have been the widest part of St. Giles's, where it might have continued an ornament to the city and out of the way of the public road; or rather it should have been placed in the great quadrangle of Christ Church, where it would have been a more appropriate and more lasting ornament than Mercury, who, although of lead, has long since flown from his pedestal. A monument to the memory of Otho Nicholson is placed at the entrance into the Cathedral of Christ Church."

As may be supposed from the date (1610), the construction is of mixed character, the

outline Gothic, the details Italian. It comprises a square basement, an octagonal termination carried on four arches springing from the top of the basement, with niches, figures, and other sculptured decorations. It appears at one time to have been painted, vestiges of colour being still apparent in protected portions of the upper part.*

A short walk across the country brought us to the pretty little church of Clifton Hampden, nicely restored a few years ago, under the direction of Mr. Scott. It stands on an elevation, and, seen from the river, has a picturesque effect. It is small, of decorated character, has a bell-cot and spire, with a buttress up the centre of west wall to carry its open roof of oak, rood screen, credence table, sedilia, and a monument, with recumbent figure, on north side of the chancel, in memory of a late incumbent. The rood-end is diapered—gold on a red ground. The church-yard is entered by a Lych-gate, of good design, and some of the recent grave-stones are of ecclesiastical character.

Our early antiquaries used to say that the world had been barren since the Romans. A French writer has preserved a record of one of this class, who was rejoicing in the total destruction of a Gothic church, because in the midst of its broken stained glass, demolished carvings, and headless saints, he, a corresponding member of six learned societies, had found a *Roman brick*, and, what was more, a brick of a good epoch: The restoration of mediæval buildings, which has been going on throughout the country for some few years, shows with what different feelings such works are now viewed. This has brought an evil of another sort, to be avoided. Thus, at the closing meeting of the Archaeological Institute, the Bishop of Oxford dwelt at considerable length on the danger arising from a superstitious love of the past, and the prizing of old things merely because they were old. He expressed his opinion that such was not the legitimate effect of Societies like the present; that they should look with discriminating judgment on the past, which sharpened men's minds for the present. And Professor Willis followed in the same strain: he dwelt on the error in which many were apt to fall by overrating the relics of the past; copying them without reference to the ritual with which they were associated; and observed that he had no desire to induce them to sweep away the monuments of a former ritual—paving, &c., but he would preserve them as monuments of those errors from which they themselves had been preserved.

From Clifton Hampden the party made their way to Sutton Court, in Berkshire, about two miles from Abingdon, where there is an exceedingly interesting 14th-century residence, the Abbey Manor House now occupied by the rector of the parish. The open

* As old documents quoted in the *Building of the City of London* state—"The conduit is exactly square, built with the polished stone, and after its imitation the water of the sewer has since the year 1610 had a, which is a singular sight, notwithstanding the great weight of each arch above the square walls, it was a well contrived piece of masonry and piers, while doing, as to support the whole top with the sides of the old walls were raised down. Note the arms of the University, City, and Foundation—the arms of which is assure, two bent, ermine chief three stars in bend, gold, according to his name, Nicholas. Note, that on every side is the same coat of arms. The each corner above the cornice are painted, on the three sides of each pier, as many and each, making a total of twelve between each corner dial, facing north, south, east, and west, is finely carved a sort of open work, consisting of capital letters, the end is in his gothic, and interlaced binding of coils and scrolls. Note, that the letters U, N, complete a rebate, being the initial letters of his name, Nicholas. Note, that on every side of the conduit, on the four sides of each pier, proceeding from the corners of it, stand as many curious arches which enclose in the upper part supporting a steady form of an octagonal form. Under and beneath these arches is contained a large conduit, over which stands Queen Mary, sister to the Emperor, riding on a red, and a Red, alighting in the same way, and on a Red, which was the city supplied with good and wholesome water."

* Those who did go to Silchester saw, outside the wall, near the north-east end, the remains of a Roman amphitheatre, which, it is supposed, was sufficiently capacious to accommodate 10,000 persons. They saw that the city originally had four gates, standing exactly north, east, south, and west, from each of which commenced a street, 30 feet wide, extending to the opposite entrance, and besides these there were ten smaller streets, all running in a direct line, and intersecting each other. According to Jordan's *Oxford Journal*, near the middle of the city, which was enclosed by the walls in the form of an irregular octagon, have been discovered the foundations of a large structure, consisting of free-stone about 3 feet thick, supposed to be a forum or temple, because within it were found the remains of a little elevated building, supposed to be an altar. It is maintained by many antiquaries and historians, who have pursued the most industrious investigations with regard to this site, that it was from this spot that the emperor Constantine was invested by the soldiery with the purple in the year 407; that from this once potent and august city he issued his edicts to a trembling and subdued people; and that King Arthur was crowned on this identical spot. The city was destroyed by Ella, the Saxon, in the year 900. The length of the remaining part of the walls is from 18 to 20 feet, and, when entire, must have been much more, and some were originally full 24 feet in thickness. Sufficient still exists to denote that this was a principal Roman station, enriched with stately edifices, and deemed one of the chief provincial cities constructed and inhabited by the masters of the world. This has been true to time, been confirmed by the discovery of fragments of capitals, mosaic pavement, tesserae, large numbers of ancient British and Roman coins, the remains of public baths; while the occasional discovery of some additional relics induces the belief that vast quantities of antiquarian curiosities are still buried beneath the surface, and hold out the promise of reward to future industry and research.